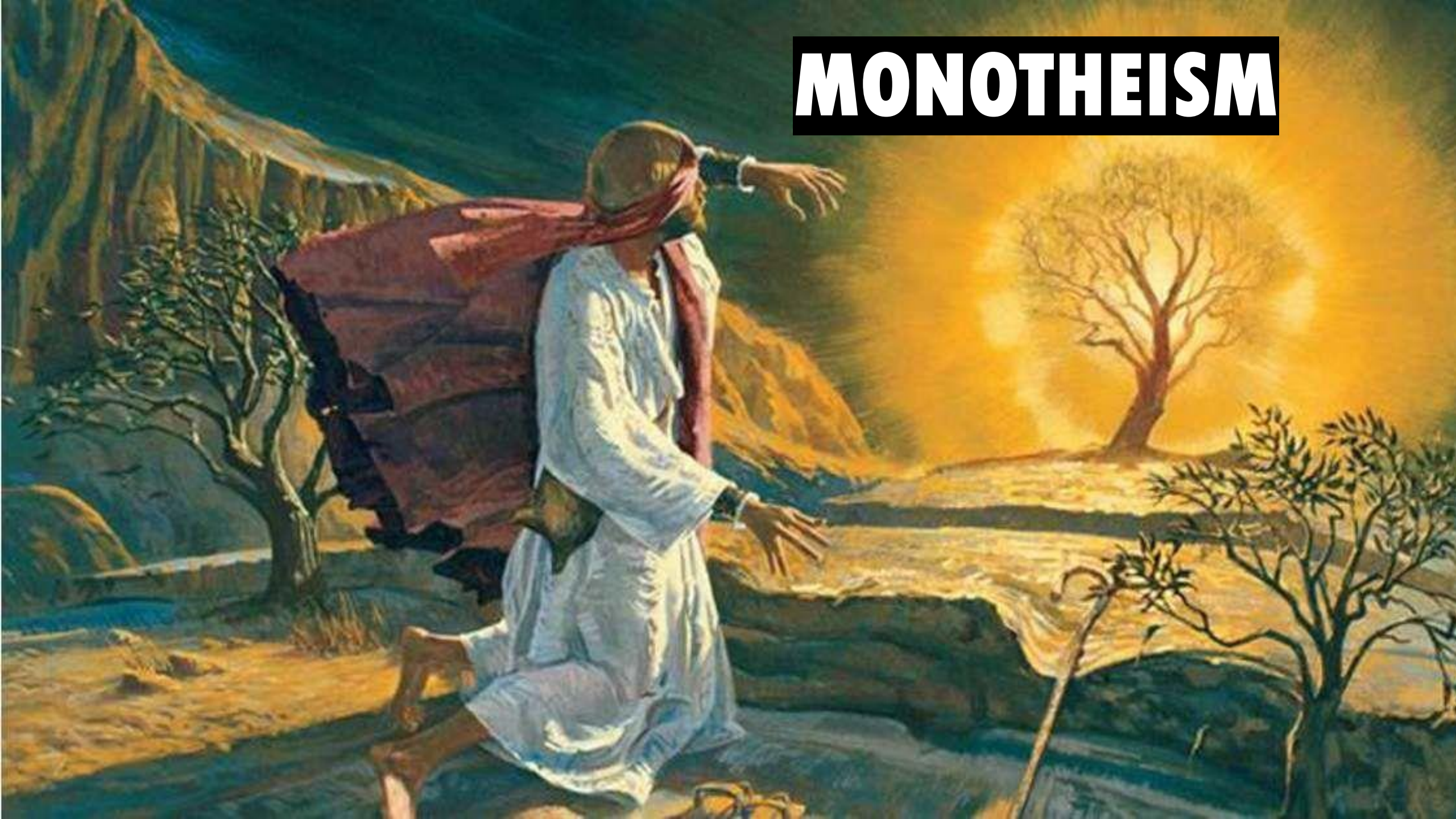


MONOTHEISM







The Cyrus Cylinder (539 BCE)

“I am Cyrus, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world...”

The Persian Empire, 557-500 BCE

-**Cyrus** (557-530 BCE) founded the Persian Empire in what is today Iran through his skills as a general and a **diplomat who saw respect for others' religious practices as good imperial policy**

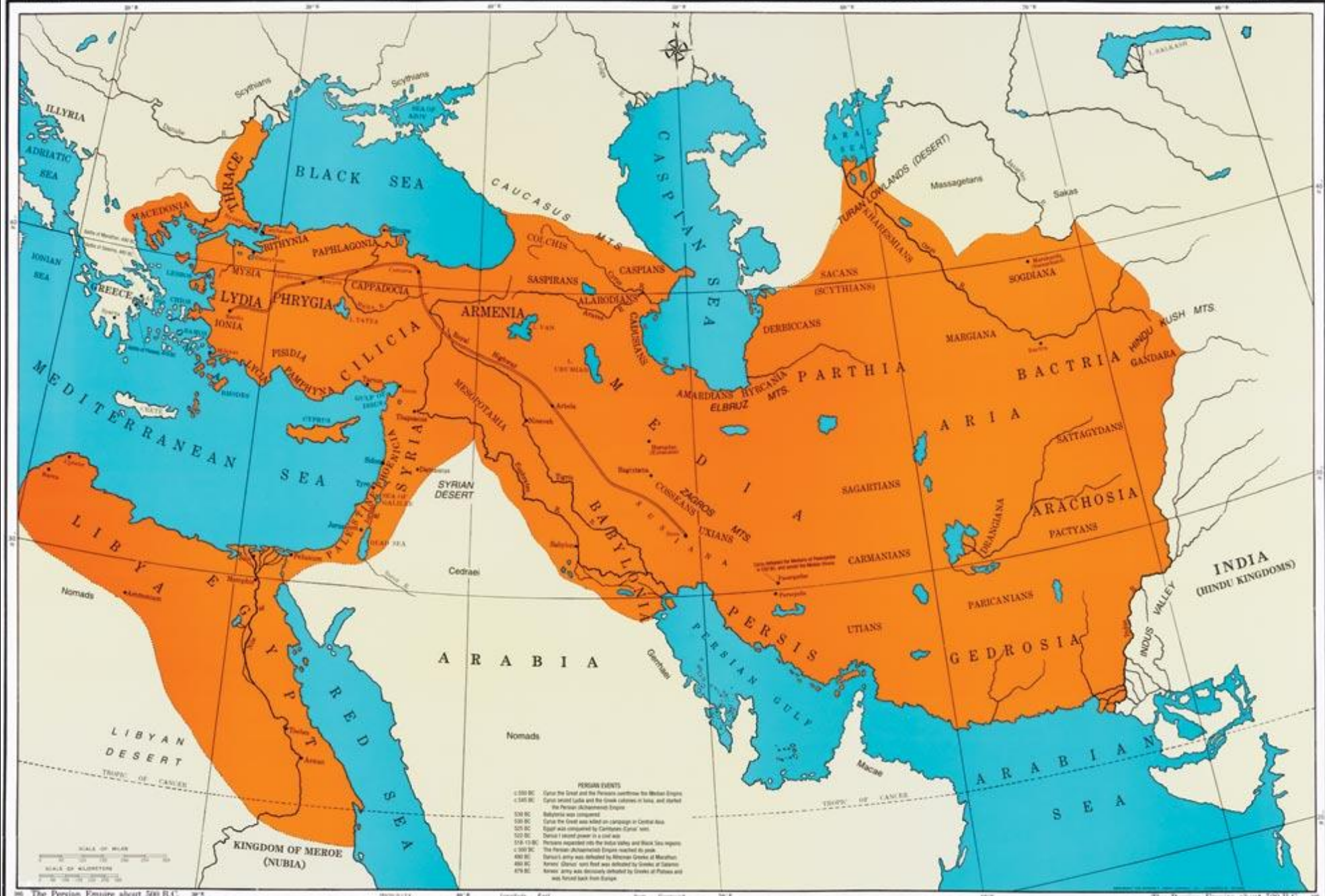
-Everything about the Persian king emphasized his magnificence...his servants held their hands before their mouths so that he would not have to breathe the same air as they...the king punished criminals by mutilating their bodies and executing their families

-**Satraps**- regional governors who ruled enormous territories

-Darius I- extended Persian power...**royal roads** and a courier system provided communication among the far flung provincial centers



THE PERSIAN EMPIRE ABOUT 500 B.C.



- PERSIAN EVENTS**
- 1200 B.C. Cyrus the Great and the Persians overthrow the Median Empire
 - 1300 B.C. Cyrus united Lydia and the Greek colonies in Ionia, and started the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire
 - 520 B.C. Babylon was conquered
 - 500 B.C. Cyrus the Great was killed in a campaign in Central Asia
 - 485 B.C. Egypt was conquered by Cambyses, Cyrus' son
 - 480 B.C. Darius I seized power in a civil war
 - 480-479 B.C. Persians repulsed into the Indian Valley and Black Sea regions
 - 450 B.C. The Persian (Achaemenid) Empire reached its peak
 - 400 B.C. Darius' army was defeated by Athenian Greeks at Marathon
 - 330 B.C. Persian (Achaemenid) Empire was destroyed by Alexander of Macedon
 - 270 B.C. Persian (Achaemenid) Empire was destroyed by Seleucus of Seleucia
 - 170 B.C. Persian (Achaemenid) Empire was destroyed by Seleucus of Seleucia



Kazakhstan

Mongolia

Romania

Uzbekistan

Kyrgyzstan

Greece

Turkey

Turkmenistan

China

Syria

Iraq

Afghanistan

Iran

Pakistan

Nepal

Libya

Egypt

Saudi Arabia

Oman

India

Myanmar
(Burma)

Chad

Sudan

Yemen

Thailand

Gulf of Aden

Arabian Sea

Bay of Bengal

Vietnam

South Sudan

Ethiopia

Gulf of Thailand

Somalia

Laccadive Sea

Malaysia

Kenya

Indonesia



“It is said that as many days as there are in the whole journey, so many are the men and horses that stand along the road, each horse and man at the interval of a day’s journey; and these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed.”

-Herodotus, *The Histories*, 440 BCE



West vs. East

Greece vs. Persia

History | Popular culture

The obscure religion that shaped the West



“

Even the idea of Satan is a fundamentally Zoroastrian one

Persian Religion

-Zoroaster/Zarathustra (circa 1000-900 BCE)



-Raphael, *The School of Athens*, 1509-1511

-Haydar Hatemi, *Zoroaster*, 2013



Raphael, *The School of Athens*, 1509-1511



The Mythical Origins of Zoroaster

-started teaching monotheism at age 30 and preached his religion for 70 years

-the king Vishtasp called an assembly of all the great men, including Zoroaster to advise him on certain issues. Zoroaster brought a book with him, the **Avesta**. He set the book before Vishtasp when the learned men of the country were present and the crowd was gathered there. Zoroaster ordered copper to be melted and then said: ‘Oh God, if this is your book with which you have sent me to this King, then prevent the copper harming me.’” Then he ordered the molten copper to be poured over his body; it was poured over his breast and abdomen, but the copper ran over and beneath him without doing any harm to him and from each of his hairs hung a round bullet of copper. Vishtasp accepted the new religion and professed that angels had come to him from God and ordered him to believe on Zoroaster when he came and to accept the message he brought.

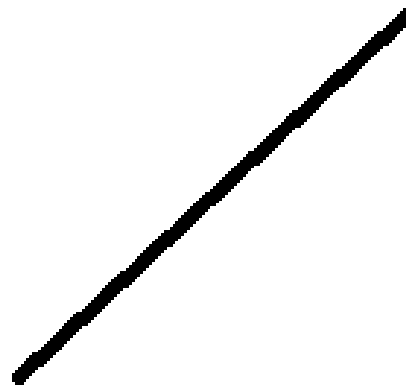
-No one is allowed to have access to the book of Avesta which Zoroaster brought, except those who are trusted in their faith, and whose conduct is found praiseworthy by the followers

-**Zoroaster** broke with the traditional....religions of the region which closely mirrored those of India, and espoused the **idea of a one good God –Ahura Mazda**. Zoroastrianism was also the first to link religious belief with profound attachment to **personal morality**. Zoroastrianism contained the concepts of **heaven, hell, redemption**, the promise of a **Messiah**, the existence of an evil spirit **Ahriman** and – most striking of all – the prospect of a final battle for the salvation of man at ‘**the end of time**’ between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman leading to the latter's final defeat.

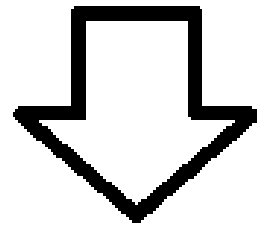


Ahura Mazda
(One God)

Ahriman
(Evil Spirit)



Zoroaster
(Messiah)



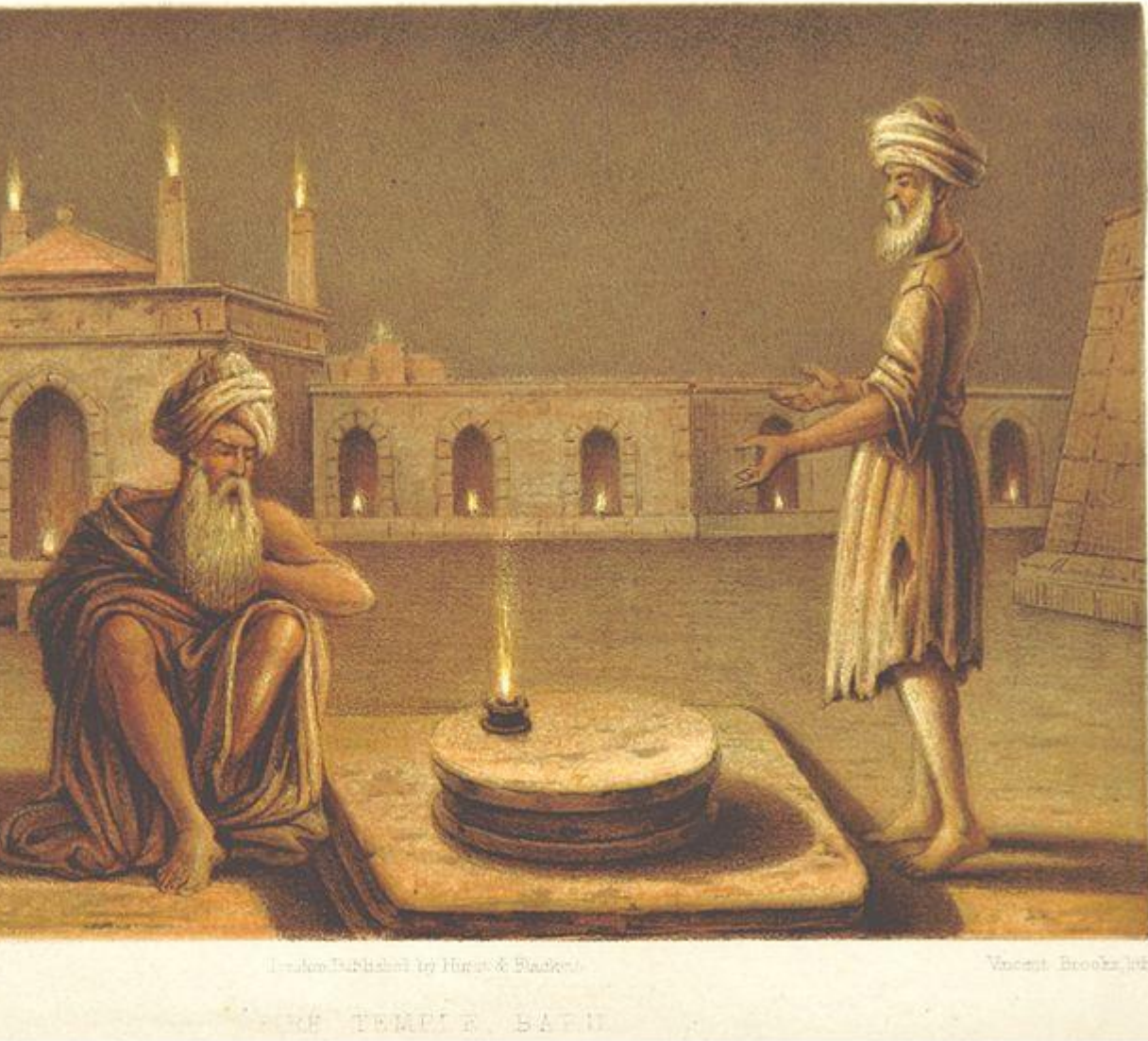
End Times
Judgement
Afterlife

God Admits Stealing Idea For Messiah From Zoroastrianism

5/31/16 9:44am • SEE MORE: NEWS ▾

 **the ONION**[®]





-The most important doctrine of Zoroastrianism was **moral dualism**, which saw **the world as a battlefield between the divine forces of good and evil**. Human beings had to choose between the way of truth or the way of the lie, between purity and impurity. **In Persian religion only those judged righteous after death made it across ‘the bridge of separation’ to heaven and avoided falling from its narrow span into hell.** Persian religion’s emphasis on ethical behavior and on a supreme god had a lasting influence on others, especially the Israelites.

-”It is supposed that with the birth of Zoroaster, twelve thousand years following the creation of the world, a decisive turn was given the conflict in favor of the good, and that when [Zoroaster] returns, after twelve millennia, in the person of the **messiah Saoshyant**, there will take place a final battle and cosmic conflagration, through which the principle of darkness and life will be undone. Whereafter, all will be light, there will be no further history, and the Kingdom of God (Ahura Mazda) will have been established in its pristine form forever.” (Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*)

Zoroastrianism

-“Zoroaster has been called ‘the first personality to have worked creatively and formatively upon the course of religious history.’”

- “The first novelty of this radically new teaching lay in its treatment in purely ethical terms of the ultimate nature and destiny of both mankind and the world...In the Far East, as well as in India...the world was not to be reformed, but only known, revered, and its laws obeyed. Personal and social disorder stemmed from departure from those cosmic laws, and reform could be achieved only by a return to the unchanging root. In Zoroaster’s new mythic view, on the other hand, the world, as it was, was corrupt— not by nature but by accident— and to be **reformed by human action**. Wisdom, virtue, and truth lay, therefore in **engagement**, not in disengagement...”

-”This is not the old, ever-revolving cycle of the archaic Bronze Age mythologies, but a **sequence, one and for all, of creation, fall, and progressive redemption, to culminate in a final, decisive....victory of the One Eternal God of Righteousness and Truth.**”

-**From *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* by Joseph Campbell**

There are around 124,000 practicing Zoroastrians in the world today, and that number is likely to decrease because Zoroastrians do not believe in conversion. Most Zoroastrians live in Iran and still practice tenets of the religion that were developed thousands of years ago, including open-air burials where they leave the body of a deceased person on top of a wooden tower to be exposed to the elements and eaten by vultures in the belief that the earth is sacred and pure and a dead body pollutes it.



Zoroastrians Keep the Faith, and Keep Dwindling

The holiday Nowruz is celebrated across the Middle East. Nowruz is the Persian New Year's celebration that dates back 3,500 years and has roots in Zoroastrianism as a religious festival ushering in spring and connected with ideas of death/rebirth. Nowruz has grown in popularity over the years and is recognized as a public holiday in several countries. World leaders like President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau each gave public statements to recognize Nowruz this year.

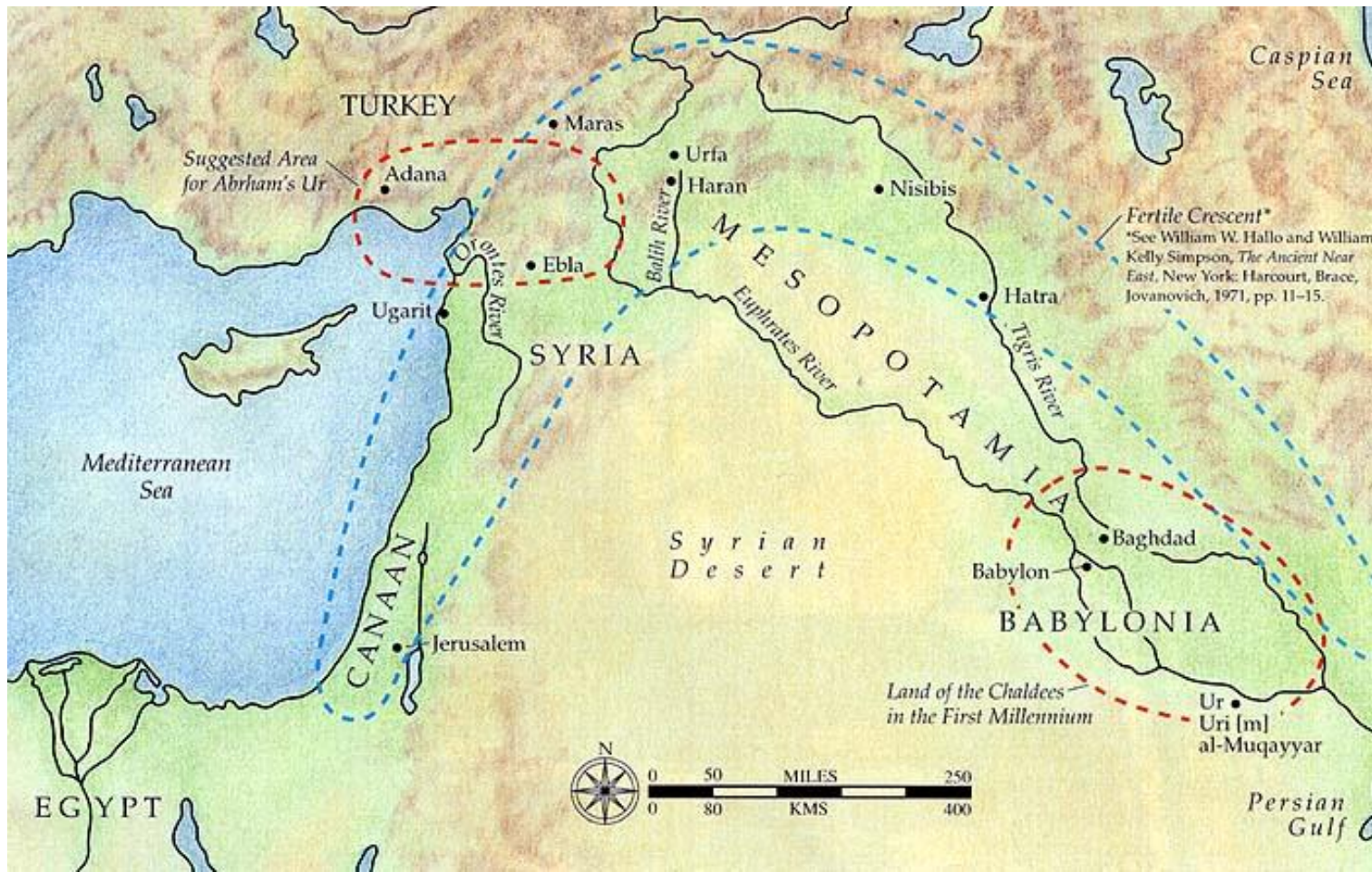


Towers of Silence, such as this one in Chilpyk, Uzbekistan, are where Zoroastrians would leave the bodies of the dead to be consumed by birds (Credit: Alamy)

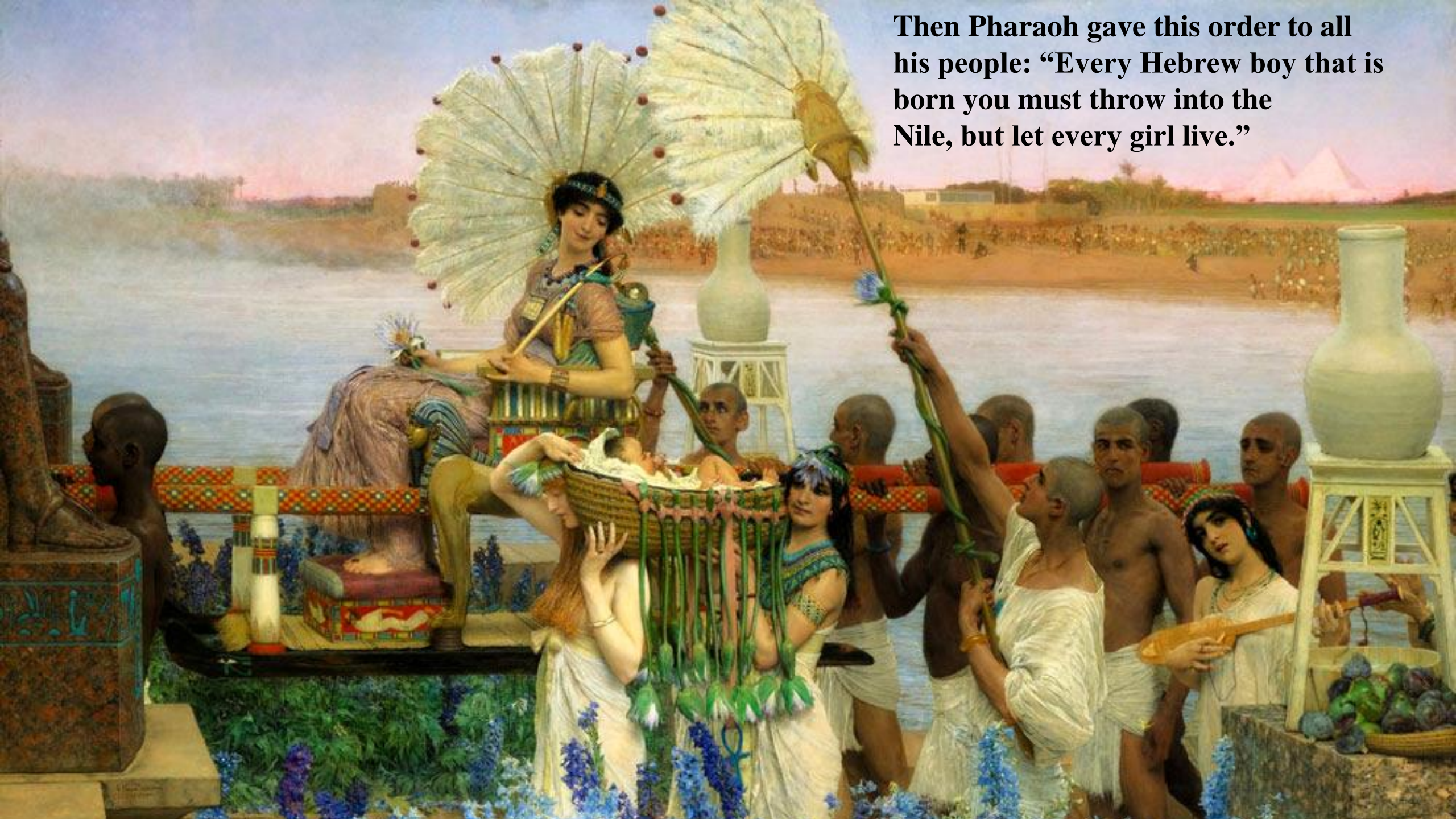
The Israelites, Origins to 539 BCE

-no source provides definitive evidence for the historical background of the Israelites

-Israelites moved from the Mesopotamian city of Ur to Canaan and then to Egypt...by the thirteenth century BCE the pharaohs had forced the Israelite men into slave-labor gangs



Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”







-God instructed Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt against the will of the king. God sent ten plagues to compel the pharaoh to free the Israelites, but the king still tried to recapture them during their flight, God therefore miraculously parted the sea to allow them to escape eastward; the water swirled back together and drowned the pharaoh's army as it tried to follow.

-Book of Exodus



No, really: There is a scientific explanation for the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus



Scientists Explain Red Sea Parting and Other Miracles

A miracle! Science claims it has figured out how sea was parted for Israelites

Researchers reconstruct wind and wave combinations that could have produced dry path across sea described in Exodus

Mount Sinai

Mountain in Egypt



Exodus 3:15

“...God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (I AM THAT I AM) and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "**I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.**"”

-In Hebrew, the name of God, “I am that I am” (Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh) is traditionally written as the four letters **YHWH**. These four letters are called the **Tetragammatron**.

-In the 1800s, a Hebrew scholar named Wilhelm Gesenius proposed that the proper pronunciation of YHWH in English is Yahweh and this is the commonly accepted pronunciation by religious scholars and historians today, although Jehovah is another proposed pronunciation.

-observant Jews use Hashem (“the Name”), El, Elohim, or Adonai when speaking of God



-in the biblical narratives...the crucial event in the history of the Israelites: the formalizing of a contractual agreement (**a covenant**) between them and their deity, who revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in the desert northeast of Egypt. This **contract** between the Israelites and Yahweh specified that, in return for their worshipping him exclusively as their only god and living by his laws, Yahweh would make them his **chosen people** and lead them into a promised land of safety and prosperity.

-”The intimate God of Moses had mysteriously shared powers with his creatures. He even treated his people as his equals by covenanting with them. **The supreme paradox was that this all-powerful Creator-God sought a voluntary relation with his creatures.**” (Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Seekers*)

10 Commandments

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.



- “The Ten Commandments...made **obedience** the mark of the believer. This idea would become, millennia later, the very heart of Islam (from Arabic, for ‘resignation,’ surrendering to God’s will.” (Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Seekers*)

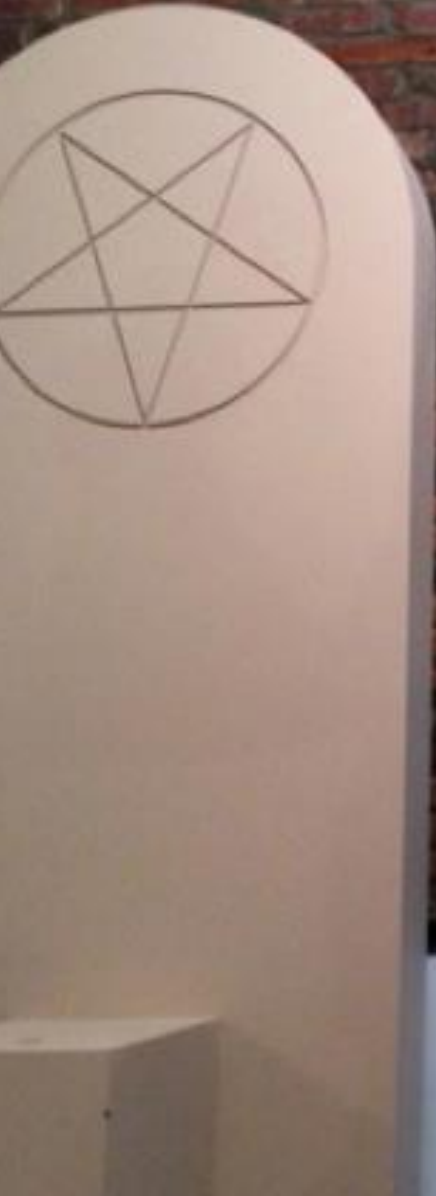
613 Commandments

-The Talmud records a sermon by the **Rabbi Simlai** in the 3rd century C.E. (circa 255) that lists 613 commandments, known as **Mosaic Law**

- 1. To know there is a G-d--Exodus 20:2
2. Not to entertain thoughts of other gods besides Him--Exodus 20:3
3. To know that He is one--Deuteronomy 6:4
4. To love Him--Deuteronomy 6:5
5. To fear Him--Deuteronomy 10:20
6. To sanctify His Name--Leviticus 22:32
7. Not to profane His Name--Leviticus 22:32
8. Not to destroy objects associated with His Name--Deuteronomy 12:4
9. To listen to the prophet speaking in His Name--Deuteronomy 18:15
10. Not to test the prophet unduly--Deuteronomy 6:16

Arkansas has installed the Ten Commandments at its Capitol

Man destroys new Ten Commandments statue at Arkansas Capitol



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDoFYk4nzl>



Satanic statue one step closer to being placed on State Capitol grounds

Arkansas Installs A New Ten Commandments Monument At Its Capitol

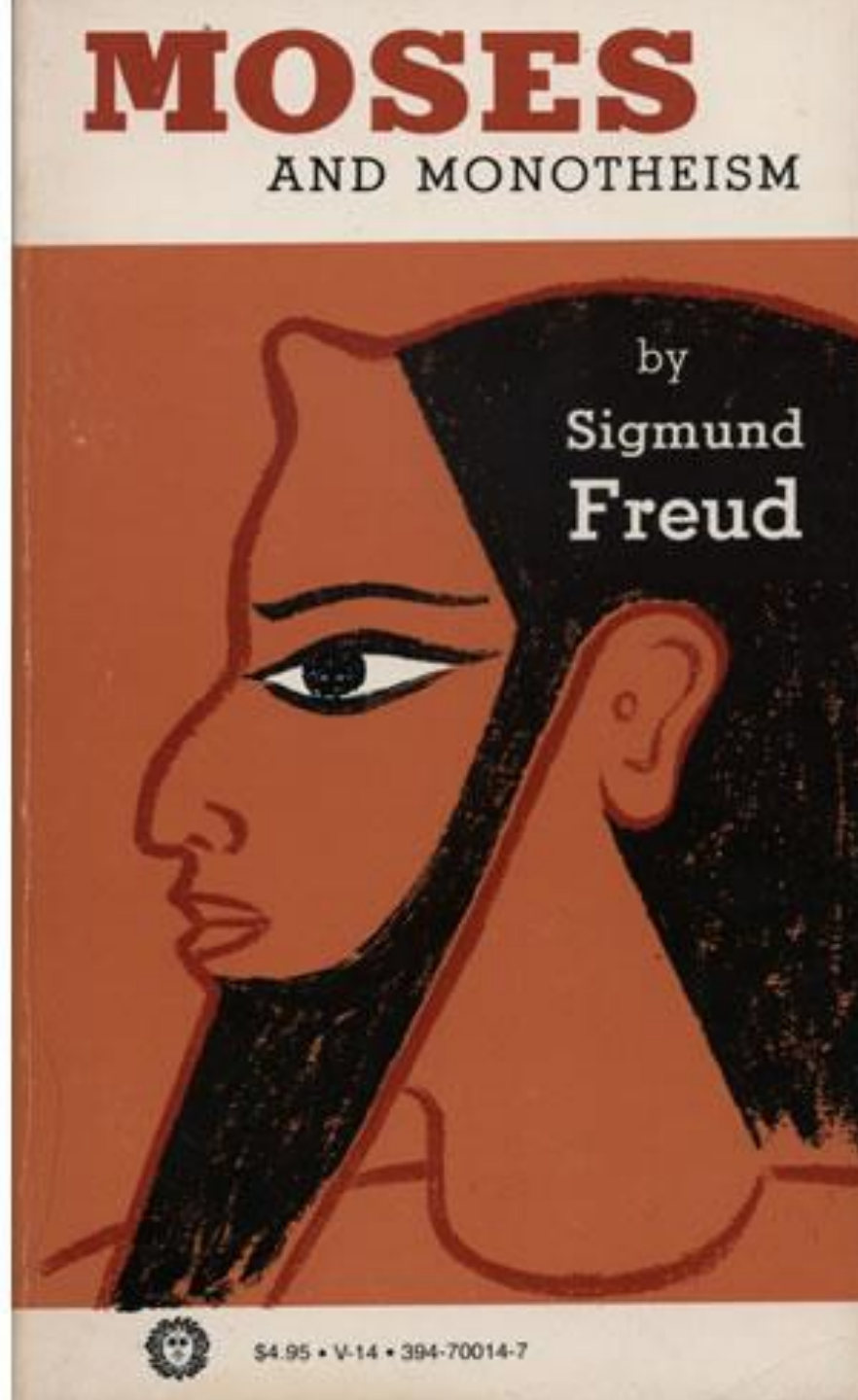
April 26, 2018 · 1:19 PM ET

BILL CHAPPELL



“Probably there is more space given to Moses in the Qur'an than to any other Old Testament character, even Abraham the Friend of God. The figure and symbol of Moses in the New Testament also outweighs that of Abraham. Musa (Moses) is named in thirty- four suras of the Qur'an and in twelve books of the New Testament. He is a popular topic of legendary material in the Hadith and the Church Fathers.”

-C. Umhau Wolf, “Moses in Christian and Islamic Tradition,” *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Apr., 1959), pp. 102-108

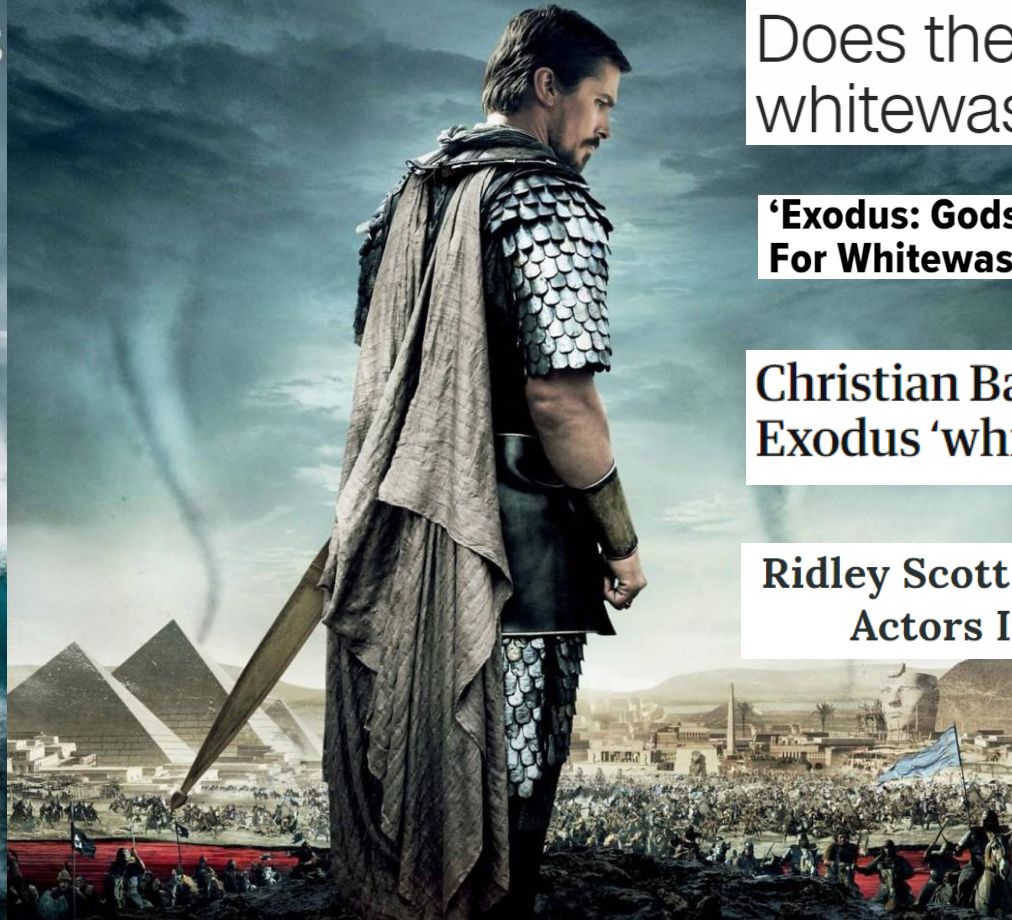


FROM THE DIRECTOR OF GLADIATOR
EXODUS
GODS AND KINGS



DECEMBER 12

HE DEFIED AN EMPIRE
AND CHANGED THE WORLD



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF GLADIATOR
EXODUS
GODS AND KINGS

18 DECEMBER IN DE BIOSCOOP IN 3D

EXODUSFILM.NL #EXODUSNL

Does the new 'Exodus' movie whitewash the Bible?

'Exodus: Gods And Kings' Film Sparks Backlash For Whitewashing Characters

Christian Bale defends Ridley Scott over Exodus 'whitewashing'

Ridley Scott Explains Why He Cast White Actors In *Exodus: Gods and Kings*

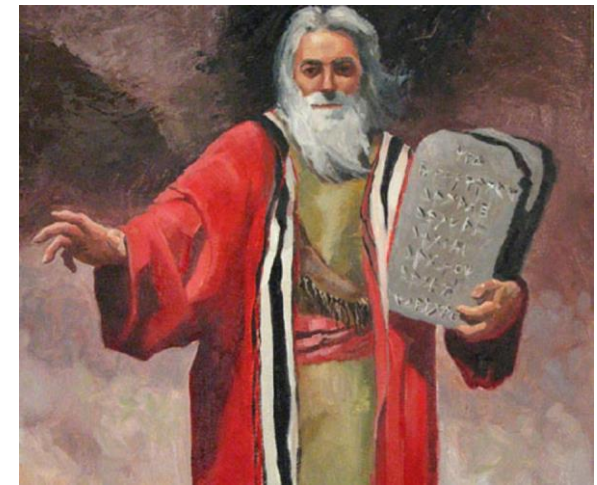
"I can't mount a film of this budget, where I have to rely on tax rebates in Spain, and say that my lead actor is Mohammad so-and-so from such-and-such. I'm just not going to get it financed. So the question doesn't even come up." -Ridley Scott

Was Moses real?



Did the Exodus of Moses and His People Happen?

Man versus myth: does it matter if the Moses story is based on fact?

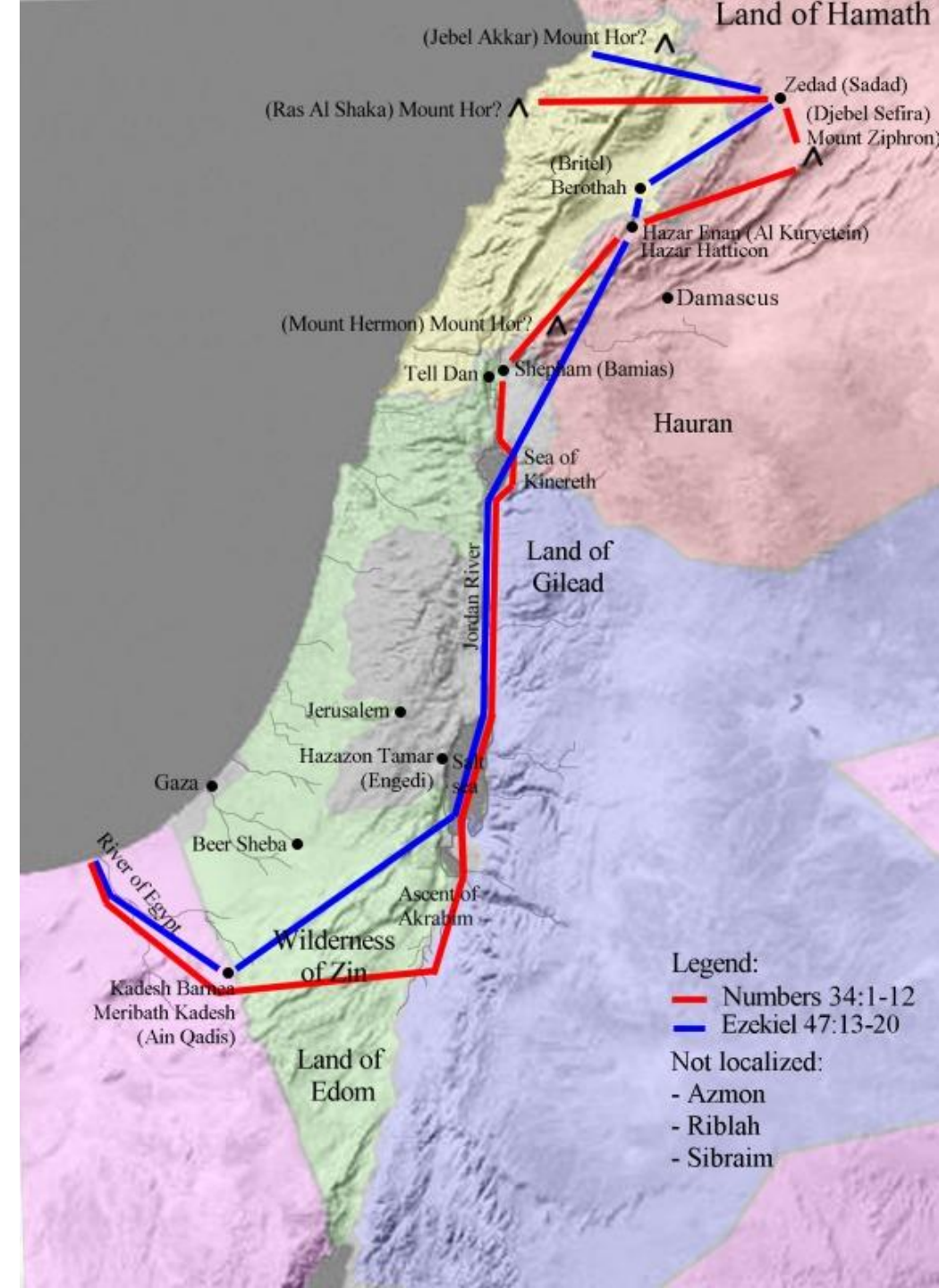


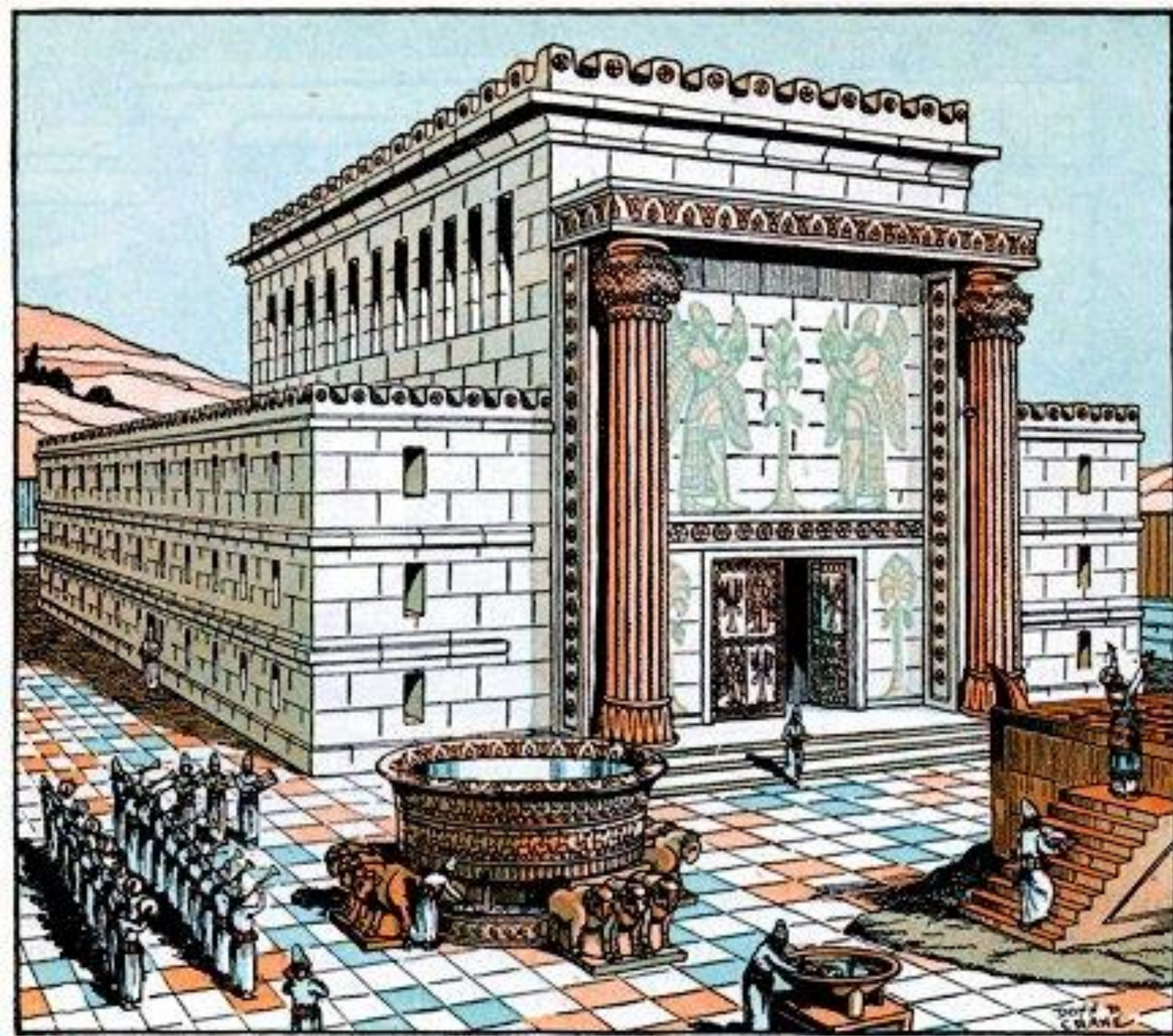
But the problem with historical evidence goes much deeper. “Moses himself has about as much historic reality as King Arthur,” British archaeologist Philip Davies famously concluded. A more moderate conclusion comes from the historian Tom Holland: “The likelihood that the biblical story records an actual event is fairly small.”

History of the Israelites

-the Israelites who fled Egypt with Moses made their way back to Canaan [twelve Israelite tribes]...three Israelite kings- Saul, David, Solomon...**built a temple...and daily animal sacrifices to God that priests performed on the altar there became the center of the Israelites' religion**

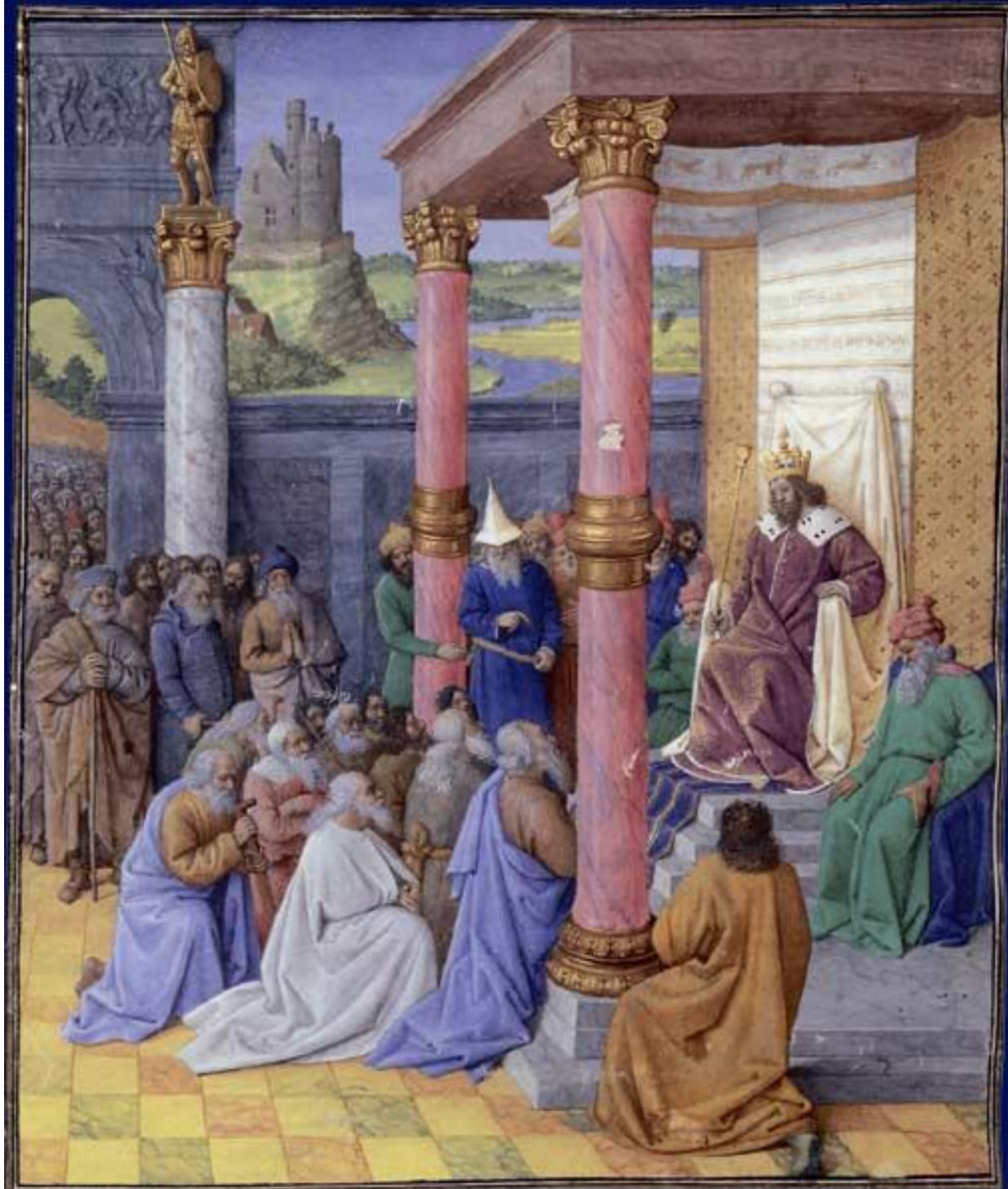
In 597 BCE, the Babylonians conquered Judah and captured its capital, Jerusalem. In 586 BCE, they destroyed the temple to Yahweh and banished the Israelite leaders, along with much of the population, to Babylon. In exile the Israelites learned about Persian religion





-When the Persian king Cyrus overthrew the Babylonians in 539 BCE, he permitted the Israelites to return to their part of Canaan....
Cyrus allowed them to rebuild their main temple in Jerusalem and to practice their religion.

-Diaspora- dispersion of population, came to characterize the history of the Jewish people.



Zoroastrianism Influenced Judaism → Christianity → Islam....

-Zoroastrianism and Judaism came to share ideas, such as the existence of God and Satan, angels and demons, God's day of judgement, and the arrival of the messiah.

-”It was the Persian king of kings, Cyrus, who liberated the Hebrews from Babylon and one of his successors, Darius, who organized and funded the return of some of the captives to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem...**[and this interaction with the Persians who practiced Zoroastrianism] reorganised the traditional religion of the Judaeans and Israelites. What emerged was a stricter monotheistic version which was consistent with basic beliefs of the Persian imperial religion – Zoroastrianism.**

-Jewish prophets...preached that their defeats were divine punishment for neglecting the Sinai covenant and mistreating the poor. Some prophets also predicted the end of the present world following a great crisis, a judgement by Yahweh, and salvation leading to a new and better world. This **apocalypticism (revelation)**, recalling Babylonian prophetic wisdom literature, would later provide the worldview of Christianity.

-Israelite monotheism made the preservation and understanding of a sacred text, the Hebrew Bible (Torah), the center of religious life. Making scripture the focus of religion proved the most crucial development for the history not only of Judaism but also of Christianity and Islam, because these later religions made their own sacred texts—the Christian Bible and the Qur’an...the centers of their belief and practice

-”...writing expanded tribal revelations into a world religion.”
(Boorstin, *The Seekers*)



Religious Influence

Egyptian Religion → Zoroastrianism → Judaism → Christianity → Islam

-heaven/hell/judgement

-prophets/visions

-the world can be reformed by human action

-moral duality (Good vs. Evil)

-personal morality/salvation

-end times

-sacred texts form focus of religion

-monotheism (one God)

